

The Six Basic Steps for LUCID DREAMING

There are many techniques and methods that you can use for inducing lucid dreams, but there is an underlying process behind most, if not all of them. I have broken this underlying process down into six basic steps to serve as a foundation for your lucid dream training. Once you absorb these steps and start following them, it is only a matter of time before you have your first lucid dream.

In case you are wondering how long it will take for you to have your first one, just follow through with the steps and have faith that you will have one. Statistically, the time it takes for someone to have their first lucid dream averages from three weeks to two months, but yours may be tonight, but don't be discouraged if you try for a while and don't succeed. There seems to be an obsession in our society for instant results. If you are one of these people, realize that this is one of your first obstacles to overcome. Only one thing is certain: If you never stop trying, you are guaranteed to succeed.

Are you dreaming? Are you dreaming?

The Six Basic Steps

- 1) Doing the Mental Prep-Work
- 2) Increasing dream recall
- 3) Keeping a dream journal
- 4) Becoming familiar with your Dreams
- 5) Adding Awareness to your Waking Consciousness
- 6) Linking your Awareness to your Dreams

Step One) Doing the Mental Prep-Work

This step involves setting up the right mental foundation and building a mental framework that will maximize your success. In order to do this, you must take a look at your belief systems. I can't emphasize enough the crucial role that our belief systems play in determining our experience. As you develop your ability to lucid dream, you will be directly interacting with your thoughts and your belief systems, and you will be able to experience first hand how important it is to manage your thoughts.

Here are four key questions that you need to ask yourself. Do you think you can do this? Do you think dreams are important? Do you really want to have lucid dreams? Do you know what you will do when you become lucid? Not only should you be asking yourself these questions, but you should also be taking an active part in strengthening these beliefs, or changing them if that is the case. Let's go over each of these questions to emphasize what kind of mental prep-work you need to be doing.

"Do you think you can do this?" For starters, you must always have a positive attitude. If you have any doubts, then your first assignment is to replace each and every doubt with a self-empowering belief. If you think lucid dreaming is some rare phenomenon, realize that it is a natural ability. If you think it is going to be difficult,

assure yourself that it will come naturally. Just remember, tying your shoes as a child was difficult but with time it became second nature, and so too will lucid dreaming. As soon as you have your first lucid dream, it'll be that much easier to have a second one, and a third one, and in due time you will be having them consistently.

"Do you think dreams are important?" Once you have a positive, confident attitude, the next step is to make dreaming a top priority. The simple act of believing that your dreams are important will dramatically increase your results. Most people don't place any emphasis on their dreams so they in turn don't recall many dreams, and not surprisingly most of these people are not even aware that it is possible to have lucid dreams. They don't know any better because they haven't made dreaming a priority. You, on the other hand, will view your dreams as important, and this will speed up your progress substantially.

"Do you really want to have lucid dreams?" The key to this question is desire and enthusiasm. The more you cultivate your desire to have lucid dreams, the more emotionally charged your intent will be. The more charged your intent is, the more likely that these desires will produce results. Along the same lines, the more enthusiastic you are towards learning how to lucid dream, the more you will absorb and the more you will be actively drawing this experience towards you. Sending messages to your subconscious that you think dreams are important and that you enthusiastically want to have them will speed up your progress dramatically.

"Do you know what you will do when you have a lucid dream?" The point of this question is to be purposefully prepared. It sounds so simple, but just by having a plan you increase the odds of becoming lucid. If you have a goal or a mission planned, you will have that much more reason to become lucid and carry out your mission. The plan should be well thought out and thoroughly embedded in your mind. Throughout the day and before going to bed, remind yourself of your goal, and in keeping with the last question, cultivate a desire to fulfill your goal. In the beginning, you may want to keep your plan simple. Your goal may be as simple as looking at your hands or surveying the dreamscape or maybe you would like to fly. As you develop the ability to prolong your lucid dreams, you will be able to carry out more elaborate missions.

So be positive. Replace doubt with confidence and skepticism with belief. View your dreams as being important. Make dreaming a priority. Cultivate your desire to reach your goal. Be enthusiastic. Be prepared and have a plan. As you can see these mental prep-work concepts do overlap and intertwine, so start making all of them work for you today. This mental conditioning will not only help speed up the lucid dreaming process, but you can apply it to any other aspects of your life that you want to develop.

Step Two) Increasing Dream Recall

ARE YOU DREAMINGPPP

As mentioned earlier, if you can't remember your dreams it makes it that much harder to have lucid ones. So this step focuses on increasing your dream recall. You may be one of the fortunate ones who remembers a lot of dreams, but if you are not, don't be discouraged. There are many tried and tested methods for developing your dream recall. There are so many effective tips for increasing dream recall that you can count on remembering more and more of your dreams with a few weeks practice.

For starters, do you really want to remember your dreams? Why? Could you be subconsciously blocking your own recall because you may be afraid of what you see? These are legitimate questions to be asking yourself. Be honest with yourself. You must make the commitment to yourself to increase your dream recall because it is important to you and it is something that you want to develop. You need to make it a conscious priority. After taking this step, it is just a matter of incorporating these techniques into your morning schedule.

Here is a list of tips and techniques that will help increase your dream recall:

1.) *Wake Motionlessly.* Upon awakening, don't open your eyes. Don't move. Lie completely still.

2.) *Wake Slowly.* Allow yourself time to naturally remember your dreams. Don't start thinking about what you are going to do for the day. Don't allow your mind to be flooded by your waking thoughts or your dreams will start fading or may even disappear entirely like bursting dream bubbles. Let your mind be focused on whatever you were just dreaming.

3.) *Let your mind drift.* Allow your thoughts to meander through whatever mental imagery you may have. Once you remember one part of a dream. Relax and allow the rest of the pieces to fall into place.

4.) *Drift through your dream checklist.* If you have absolutely no initial recall, then start running through a dream checklist in your mind. This list should include people you know, activities, places, foods, smells, music, anything that may trigger a dream fragment to surface. Allow your mind to drift through this list and ask yourself if this person or this place was in your dream. Movement is very common in dreams so try to think about action. Were you walking or running or climbing or flying? Emotions are also very prevalent so try to think about your moods. Were you happy or afraid or surprised or confused? The more familiar you are with your dreams the better you will know which questions will most likely trigger your memory, but in the beginning you can use any list as long as it is a big one.

4.) *Think and question backwards.* Try to work your memory backwards from what you can remember. You will usually remember the most current dream scenario first so for maximum retrieval it is helpful to think backwards, or think in terms of effect and cause instead of cause and effect. If you can remember one part of the dream, ask yourself how you got there? Or where did a certain dream object come from? Did you find it? Was it given to you? One dream fragment will usually lead to another until the whole dream starts to take shape, and your dream memories can be jogged by questioning yourself about what you already remember.

5.) *Try different sleeping positions.* Try all your common sleeping positions before getting out of bed to maximize your recall. You will have the best recall when you are lying in the same position that you were in when you were dreaming. If you wake up on your right side don't move until you recall all you possibly can, and then repeat this process on your left side, then your back, and your front. This may jar loose some memories and it certainly speeds up your recall.

6.) *Keep Trying.* Sometimes, you may have no morning recall but flashes of dream memories will surface during your day. Be prepared to jot down any time-released memories. They may unlock your access to more memories.

If you are still having trouble recalling your dreams, here is a surefire method that will have your remembering your dreams in no time. We know that most of our dreams occur in the last hours of our sleep so we can safely assume that this is the target time to be exercising our recall. We also know that we have a much greater likelihood of remembering a dream if we awaken directly from it, and this leads us to the ultimate method, the Alarm Clock Method.

The Alarm Clock Method: Using an alarm clock is one of the quickest and easiest ways to start increasing your dream recall especially if you rarely remember your dreams. The idea is to set your alarm for a time when you will be dreaming and awaken yourself from a dream while fresh memories are still in your head. The earlier morning hours are the best time to use this method since this is when you are most likely to be dreaming. Your alarm clock will become a valuable tool for increasing your dream recall, and in a later section I will mention how it can be used to induce lucid dreams. Here are a few ways to take full advantage of your alarm clock. Try them all to see what works best for you

"The Early Morning Technique" -Set your alarm for two hours before you normally would awaken. When it goes off, reset it to go off in a half an hour. Do this each time it goes off and you will have instant and plentiful recall. This is one of the most effective techniques because it takes full advantage of your natural dreaming cycle and it creates a daily target time when you habitually practice your dreaming skills. These few hours before you normally awake are going to become your new training grounds. This target time zone will be described in much greater detail when we cover lucid dream induction methods and again when we take a look at the lucid dream terrain.

Depending on how poor your recall is you may want to immediately write down your dreams each time you wake up. If you don't, you may experience what I refer to as dream superimposition. It happens when you wake up during the night and have vivid recall of your dreams, so vivid that you are sure you will remember them later; however, when you go back to bed you have more dreams and upon reawakening these recent dream memories have replaced the previous ones. As you exercise your dream recall you will find your memory will become better so that less dream superimposing takes place, but even after years of training it still happens to me sporadically.

"The Waking at Odd Hours Technique" This technique is pretty self-explanatory. Set your alarm to go off at any random times throughout the night. The advantage of this technique is that if you are extremely eager to develop your dreaming skills you may not want to settle for only two hours of practice a day. So you can use this technique along with the previous one to maximize your exercise.

"The Snooze Button Method" Set your alarm for a time before you would normally wake up and then continually hit the snooze button until you have to get out of bed. This is probably the most common technique, and the odds are that you have already had some experience with this one unless your alarm does not have a snooze button. By hitting the snooze button you are constantly coming in and out of dreams so you dramatically increase your recall, and it is very helpful for inducing lucid dreams as well, but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Step Three) Keeping a dream journal

The single most important thing that you can do to increase your dream recall and to maximize your lucid dreaming progress is to keep a dream journal. This increases your recall by engraining the idea that dreams are important into your subconscious mind. It also helps you become familiar with your dreams which is the focus of the next step. The habit of writing down your dreams soon becomes a habit of recalling your dreams. If you seriously want to learn how to lucid dream, you **MUST** keep a dream journal. It is not an option.

I strongly emphasize this because I know from experience that keeping a journal is a crucial part of the process. I had been trying to lucid dream for a year with little success until I started keeping one. Shortly after I started consistently making my dream journal entries, I began to recall more dreams with greater clarity and detail, and this led to my first lucid dreams. Even now after years of lucid dreaming, I still see a correlation. If I neglect my dream journal, my lucid dreams become less frequent. All it usually takes is a few days of making entries and I will be back on the lucid track.

Here are some tips on keeping your journal. Record all of your dreams with as much detail as you can. Even if something seems trivial, you should still write it down because it may turn out to be significant when viewed in the long run. Write down not only what happened during the dream but also what you were feeling and what you were thinking at the time. These emotional and mental notes will help you later when you are becoming familiar with your dreams. This will also help you see how your daily affairs and your waking mind influence your dreams. For example, you may notice during times of stress that you will have stress-influenced dreams. You may dream of being late for an exam or being unprepared for a business meeting. The point is that your dreams are sending you a message. They are reflecting what you think and feel at a subconscious level. Looking at the patterns of your dreams and examining the recurrence of certain dream themes will tell you a lot about yourself. This is yet another reason why keeping your dream journal is so important. It allows you to have an overview of your dream patterns which are actually reflections of an ever-changing you.

When keeping your journal, it is best to write your entries in present tense instead of using past tense. For example, you would write, "I'm walking down this street and I see a man" instead of "I walked down this street and I saw a man." By writing in the present tense, you may be able to remember even more of your dreams as you are recording them. Also, when working with some of the methods we will cover later like dream reentry and dream incubation, it is best to be thinking and recording in terms of now not then. As an added bonus, writing in the present tense also makes for better reading at a later date.

With each dream journal entry, you should include a date, a time if you can, and a title for each dream. To find a suitable name for your dream, imagine if it were a movie and choose the most appropriate title. Something simple is usually best as long as it captures the essence of the dream. Anything from "Red ants in a rainforest" to "Class reunion on an airplane" will be fine. If you have several different dreams during the night, it is best to separate and title each one. Mixing separate dreams together may make the dream's message harder to find and may make choosing a distinctive title nearly impossible. The main purpose of titling your dreams is to make them easier to access at a glance when you are looking through your dream journal.

Now, if you are like me or like most people, I am assuming one of two things. You are either going to think you can learn to lucid dream without keeping a dream journal or else you will start keeping a dream journal and before you know it, it will be gathering dust next to that book you meant to read. I say this only because I thought the same way. Not to say that it could not be done, anything is possible, but why not increase your odds, maximize your results, and speed up the process with a proven method. Once you get into the habit of keeping your journal, it will become as routine as putting your clothes on in the morning. Although it gets easier with time, in the beginning it is helpful to have some pointers.

Keeping a dream journal is not the easiest thing to do. I have spent many a day thumbing through random pieces of papers scribbled with dream accounts. To make the beginning of the process easier I have several suggestions based on several different approaches I have tried combined with the advice of others. It seems like such a simple thing. You dream, you wake up, and you write down your dreams. Well, there's more to it. For example, when you awaken if you start writing in your journal as you are recalling the night's dreams, it is hard to remember everything accurately in the right sequence. You may have already moved on to a new scene but then you remember something you had forgotten. This prompted me to write everything I could remember on a sheet of paper and then after doing this I would write an organized account of it in my journal. This works fine if you have lots of free time but with time being a valuable commodity it is rather inefficient.

Along with the difficulty of balancing your time and determining how organized you need to have your journal, another problem you will encounter is the simple fact that you have to do a lot of writing which in itself can become monotonous. The best approach is to recall all that you can in your head before writing anything, but even so you probably will remember more as you are writing it. By recording your dreams only on the right-hand pages of the journal, you can write late arriving memories on the left-hand page and conveniently draw an arrow to the portion of the dream in which it occurred. You can also use the left-hand pages to draw pictures of any dream objects or maps of the dreamscape. This tip may require you to buy double the amount of journals, but if you want more organized entries it certainly works.

If you do choose to use this method, you should use the left-hand pages to record what you did while awake that day, where you went, who you saw, etc... Whether you use the left/right page method or not, you should include this daily information somewhere in your journal, preferably on the same page as your dream entries. This can be very helpful when you are looking for patterns in your dreams. For example, I have found that I will often dream about things from two days before or two days after the dream. If I watched a program about natural disasters on Monday, I would not be surprised if I dreamed about it on Wednesday. If I dream about a person who I have not heard from in a while, they will usually call me two days later. I don't know why it happens, but by analyzing my dreams and the journal entries of what I did for the day, I have found this to be one of my patterns.

Many people recommend using a dictaphone to record your dreams. Upon awakening you can just speak your dreams aloud into the recorder, and enter them into your journal later. I've tried this method and find that for me at least it is not the way to go. It is not very time efficient. It certainly is easier to record them verbally, but the problem comes when you are transcribing these tapes. It takes far too long to listen to these recordings and write them down in your journal, and you still have the

problem of trying to keep the dream's sequence in order which becomes even more troublesome when you use a tape recorder.

There are many different styles of journal keeping and everyone may have a natural preference, but if you want to save some time. Learning mostly through trial and error, I have developed the easiest and most efficient method. Prompted by the idea of how wonderful it would be if the Dictaphone could write up my journal entries for me, I employed the help of my personal computer. I purchased a speech to text recognition program called vivacious. It will convert what you say into text on your computer screen. You speak at a normal pace and it does all the typing for you, and you can use it directly with Microsoft Word, my word processing program. The speech to text program was on fifty dollars and it works just fine for a dream journal. It may make an occasional error but the journal entries are extremely legible and the time saved is enormous. It completely removes the burden of writing down your dreams and it totally solves the problem of jumbled dream sequences because you can cut and paste any misplaced dream fragments into their appropriate place. If you have the resources, this is by far the easiest and most efficient way of keeping a dream journal.

Step Four) Becoming familiar with your Dreams

As your dream journal grows and your dream recall increases, naturally you will become more familiar with your dreams. Certain people, certain places, and certain activities may be more likely to appear in your dreams. For example, you may have a majority of dreams in which you are at your office or at school or at the beach. Certain dream themes might also be more common than others. You might dream of being a hero or you might dream of being chased. These recurrent patterns in your dreams are your dreamsigns, and they will be the first stepping stones on your path to lucid dreaming.

By learning your distinctive dreamsigns, you will be able to further increase your recall. Making a list of your dreamsigns is a great idea. If you are having trouble recalling any dreams, you can run down your list of dream signs and question yourself to see if any of them will spark a memory. Sometimes, by jarring just one dream fragment loose you can recover the whole dream, so knowing and using your dreamsigns will give you just the edge you need to overcome a morning bout of dream amnesia.

By working with your dreamsigns, you will develop an intimate relationship with your dreams. They will become more accessible and easier to understand. It is helpful to ask yourself why you are dreaming what you dream. What do these dreamsigns mean to you? The more you understand not only your dreamsigns but what they mean, the more you will benefit from them in both your dream life and your waking life.

If at first you are having trouble identifying your dreamsigns, realize that your dreamsigns don't have to be something extraordinary. As a matter of fact, they may be the most ordinary thing. For example, you may have dreams about your previous day or you may dream of cleaning your house. Whatever it is that you dream about, you need to be noting the patterns and commonalities. You can start with whatever patterns you notice no matter how insignificant they seem. Using these as a springboard, you will soon begin to notice more patterns developing. The process of looking for patterns may in fact create the patterns themselves so if you are having trouble finding your dreamsigns, just keep looking and they will emerge.

The quest to discover and understand your dreamsigns is a lifelong journey because your dream signs are continually evolving just like you. Some themes may last for only a week and then disappear, only to resurface a month later. Other dream signs will last much longer. As times change and you change, your dreamsigns being a reflection of you and your thoughts will change as well. Keeping up with your dreamsigns will keep you in touch with yourself.

With the help of your journal, you can easily spot the recurrent dreamsigns and you can get an overview of how they are changing. As you are making entries to your journal, you should make note of any dreamsigns that you spot. You can underline them or put a star next to them. Any notation will do as long as it is consistent and noticeable. The idea is to have them accessible at a glance so when you pick up your journal in a year you can easily see the change in the pattern of patterns, your ever-changing dreamsigns.

Identifying your dreamsigns also plays a crucial part in the lucid dreaming process. Your dreamsigns are in effect "signs that you are dreaming", and as you will soon learn in the sixth step, you can train yourself to notice your dreamsigns while you are dreaming and this will be the springboard into lucidity.

Step Five) Adding Awareness to your Waking Consciousness

Expand your Awareness

This step alone could be the source of countless books. It is almost a method in itself, but used in conjunction with the other steps, it becomes an optimal way to learn lucid dreaming. As a matter of fact, the whole process of lucid dreaming is achieved by training your awareness. The idea is to increase our daily awareness in order to benefit from the carryover effects it will have on our dreaming awareness. If you are more aware during the day, you will become more aware while dreaming.

There are many ways to increase our awareness, and we will delve into many of them in this section. The handling and manipulation of our awareness will become one of the central issues for the rest of this manual. As you exercise your awareness, you may realize that you are not usually aware of how unaware you are most of the day.

Since this is such an important aspect, it is crucial to have a workable understanding of these concepts. The ultimate goal is learning how to apply these principles to create results. First, we will deal with the concept of awareness and then we will learn the practical applications. The term awareness as we will be referring to it applies to your consciousness. How conscious are you? It alludes to your current level of self-observation. How aware are you of your awareness? It refers to your level of mindfulness. How centered is your awareness? It refers to your waking mental state of affairs. How truly aware are you? For our purposes here, these questions will culminate in your dreams when you become aware that you are dreaming by asking, am I dreaming?

For many people these reflective questions go unasked and in turn they remain unanswered. They were never taught that there are differing levels of awareness nor were they ever taught how to cultivate a heightened sense of awareness. To them, either one is awake or one is sleeping. The fact is that you can be fully conscious, semiconscious, and not conscious at all in your dreams as well as

in your waking life. It is all a matter of mindfulness. It all boils down to your level of awareness.

Do you ever realize you've been listening to the radio and haven't heard it for minutes? Do you ever drive somewhere methodically and not remember the drive once you arrive? How about misplacing your keys? Moments of "zoning out" like this occur when your awareness strays from the moment at hand. It is a result of losing your mindfulness, becoming attentionally uncentered. You may have been daydreaming or planning your day or truly "in a zone", but the resulting experience is that you were not aware of your position in your current surroundings.

There is nothing wrong with daydreaming or planning your day. The point is that we often overlook the transition of our awareness from one moment to the next. The thoughts we have often flutter through our minds without us even taking note of them, let alone actively taking part in their creation and guidance. The point is not to be obsessed with your surroundings but to be aware of your awareness. Becoming aware of your thoughts and thinking patterns is just as important as identifying your dreamsigns and dream patterns. Changing your thoughts will change your awareness, and the idea is to have your awareness programmed and locked on self-observant aware mode instead of running on a non-reflective autopilot mode.

It is as if we are normally aware of riding the crest of a wave produced by external factors instead of guiding our awareness ourselves. We react more than we reflect which leads to automated behavior. We become less questioning which in turn reduces our awareness to what we already know, or think we know. We identify with our position on this crest so habitually that after a while we fail to realize that there even are any other ways of viewing it. We overlook our part in the ocean. We overlook the active role that we play in guiding our awareness.

Try to remain aware of your awareness as if you were a bystander just watching where it goes and how it flows. The longer you can sustain this level of awareness, the better. But it isn't as easy as it sounds, and if you think it is, try sustaining it all day long and then realize how often you lose your mindfulness. The fact is that we aren't in the habit of being aware, but this is a habit that must be changed. How is your awareness flowing from one point to the next? How often throughout the day are you aware of your awareness as well as your position in your surroundings? It is this kind of mindfulness that you need to cultivate. It is this kind of centering and grounding of your awareness in awareness that you need to practice and develop until it becomes second nature, or hopefully even first nature.

Practicing meditation is an excellent way to exercise your awareness. Studies done by Jayne I. Gackenbach, a notable lucid dream researcher, show a direct correlation between meditation and lucid dreaming. People who meditate have a greater likelihood of having lucid dreams compared to non-meditators. Both meditators and lucid dreamers "are able to become "caught up" in an experience, and are aware of their inner thoughts and internal processes." (* Dreamtime, Dreamwork, pg244-45) This could be due to the emphasis put on consciously developing of one's awareness. By exercising your awareness, you are more able to be "in the moment", an ability that greatly enhances your lucid dreaming ability. "In addition, meditators and lucid dreamers find it easier to recall their dreams and tend to be "field independent" (that is, they could find their way out of a forest more easily than "field dependent" people, because they are not as easily influenced by people or objects in their environment.)" (*Dreamtime/work, pg 245) Other studies by Alexander, Boyle,

and Alexander have shown that both lucid dreamers and meditators "have less stress-related personality characteristics" than their non-meditating and non-lucid dreaming counterparts. If lucid dreaming and meditating can have these beneficial effects on our waking self, imagine what can be accomplished by practicing both of them symbiotically.

Meditation and lucid dreaming are intimately linked. By learning more about meditating and practicing it regularly, you will be stacking the odds in your favor when it comes to lucid dreaming. Many of the principles involved in meditation have a direct bearing on lucid dreaming. Meditation can be used to induce profound states of relaxation, and these relaxed states are extremely beneficial for inducing lucid dreams. Also, the goal of many meditational approaches is to silence the mind. Creating inner silence and stopping one's internal dialogue is an important technique we will be covering later on when we discuss some of the methods of inducing lucid dreams. Meditation also develops the ability to have a detached awareness, an awareness that allows itself to operate like a slightly removed observer. Once again, this ability to have a detached awareness will be extremely useful when attempting many of the lucid dream induction techniques. Meditation in and of itself requires developing a certain amount of control over your awareness. Since this is also a prerequisite for learning how to lucid dream, it is highly advisable to incorporate meditation into your lucid dreaming regime.

Now that you have an understanding of these concepts, the best way to create results is to apply them toward our goal, lucid dreaming. In order to learn how to lucid dream, you must be able to differentiate between what is "reality" and what is a dream. You must develop a questioning awareness. While awake you should be regularly doing "reality checks". There are two parts to a reality check. The first part is asking yourself if you are dreaming or not, and the second part is testing your surroundings to verify if in fact you are dreaming or not.

These reality checks should be done frequently throughout the day. The idea is to ingrain this habit into your daily routine so that it will spill over into your dreams. If you practice this consistently, it is just a matter of time until you perform a reality check while dreaming, and if you test your surroundings carefully enough you will realize you are dreaming. In the beginning, I would set the alarm on my wristwatch to go off every half hour as a constant reminder to do my reality checks. Another technique is to write one letter on each hand or wrist and each time you notice the letters you perform a reality check. You could use an L on one and a D on the other to stand for Lucid Dream or B and C for Become Conscious. The letters themselves mean very little. It is remembering to do the reality check that matters, and if this is a method you use regularly, it will surely make its way into your dreams to remind you to question your surroundings.

Asking if you are dreaming is the easy part. The trick is to be able to distinguish whether you are really dreaming or not. The idea is to look for strange or nonsensical things that could only occur if you were dreaming, but sometimes it is hard to tell. For example, the idea of pinching yourself to make sure you are not dreaming does not hold any weight in the dream realm. You will actually feel the pinch in your dream so it may lead you to believe that you aren't dreaming unless you perform other tests.

For some reason, we are much more accepting and much less analytical of inconsistencies while dreaming so performing multiple reality checks maximizes our odds of becoming lucid if in fact we are dreaming. It is also very helpful to always

assume that you are dreaming even if the tests indicate otherwise. You should keep testing and keep trying all of the different reality checks until one works, and only after you have exhausted all options should you conclude that you are not dreaming. As you get some experience, you will see firsthand how important it is to be questioning and persistent. But luckily due to all the research into lucid dreaming, reality checks are no longer a hit or miss scenario. Many of them show wide-ranging effectiveness among all dreamers.

Here is a list of the most effective reality checks:

1.) **The Common Sense Test:** This is the first and most obvious check. Examine your surroundings for anything that logically should not be there. Ask if this could happen in your normal life. Look for inconsistencies. Are you somewhere you have never been before? Are you with people who live on the other side of the country? Is there an elephant in your kitchen? These are the kinds of questions that can spark your lucidity.

2.) **The Reading Check:** This is one of the most effective checks. Simply look around and find something to read. After reading it, look away and then look back again to reread it. Do this several times. If you are dreaming, the text or numbers will usually change after several glances. It may become garbled or may have changed completely or it will not remain stable while you are reading it. Anything containing words or numbers will work: a book, a street sign, an address. Many people use the dial on their dream watch.

3.) **the Flying or Levitation Check:** This is another very effective check. See if you are able to fly. If you are not able to fly, try to levitate or hover slightly above the ground. As you become more skilled at lucid dreaming, this may become your favorite check as it is mine. The only down side is that at times you may try this and be unable to fly or levitate, yet you still may be dreaming. Always remember to use this in combination with other checks unless of course it works, which in most cases it will.

4.) **The Light Switch Check:** This is usually a quite reliable check. Find a light switch and turn it on and off. If it malfunctions then the odds are you are dreaming. Try it several times and pay close attention to when it should be on and when it should be off. It usually will not take long before it malfunctions or operates correctly while in the wrong position.

5.) **The Memory Check:** This is a very effective but largely unknown method. Simply backtrack in your mind where you have just come from and what you have been doing. Keep thinking back as far as you can and eventually you may find that there are inconsistencies in your memory. By backtracking your dream memory, you may also become aware of something illogical that has happened which you overlooked at the time. You also may find that you have an amnesia-like block that prevents you from remembering accurately. In all of these cases, you can safely assume that you are dreaming.

6.) **The Mirror Check:** This is not only an extremely effective method but as an added bonus, it usually results in quite a remarkable experience. Find a mirror and while gazing at yourself, ask if you are dreaming. You may become startled by your

reflection. You may be younger or older or have different hairstyle and hair color or you may even be someone different entirely.

7.) **The Self Observation Test:** This is also a very useful check. Just take a look at yourself. Examine your hands, arms, legs, and clothing. Usually you will immediately be tipped off that are dreaming because you will be wearing clothes that you do not own. Other times, simply looking at your dream body will spark your lucidity.

8.) **The Penetration of Matter Check:** This is not the most reliable method but it has helped me on many occasions. Simply try to push your finger through something solid like a wall or a door or a glass. At first, it may not work but if you believe that you can do it, you eventually will be able to pass your finger right through any solid. As an added bonus on this check, you are also developing your ability to allow your beliefs to directly influence your experience.

9.) **The Gravity Check:** This is a somewhat reliable check. Find something that you can throw into the air and catch safely. Start tossing it up and down and you may just find that it isn't obeying the laws of gravity as it should if you were in "reality". To maximize the success of this check, while tossing it into the air try to effect the object's rise and fall with your mind.

10.) **The Questioning of Dream Characters Check:** This may not be the best thing to try while awake but sometimes it can be effective if in fact you are dreaming. In "reality" if you asked people if we were in a dream, their response would be to accuse you of being insane, yet in the dream realm, it is sometimes a different matter. Usually the dream characters will deny that it is a dream, but they deny it with an air of denial. They usually never question your sanity, and in some cases, they don't even understand what you are saying and disregard you entirely. Also, on rare occasions, someone in your dream will admit that it is in fact a dream.

As mentioned earlier, these reality checks should be practiced regularly throughout the day. The more they become embedded into your daily routine, the sooner they will appear in your dreams. If there were one word that sums up what you need to develop in order to speed up the lucid dreaming process, it would be awareness, awareness, awareness. Working on your awareness will have direct carryover effects into your dreams, and once you become more skilled at lucid dreaming you will realize that your awareness combined with your intent is your passport into the dream realm.

Step Six) Linking your Awareness to your Dreams

Put it all together to become lucid

This last step is rather simple and easy compared to the previous steps, and due to its simplicity you should have no problem incorporating it into your daily regime. But before we move on, let's review where you should be at right now. At this point, you have done the mental prep-work, you have been increasing your dream recall, and you have been keeping your dream journal. You are becoming familiar with what you dream about, noticing your dreamsigns, and exercising your awareness by meditating and doing your reality checks consistently.

The final step is to combine what you have learned about your dreams with what you have learned about your awareness. Put simply, you need to merge your

reality checks with your dreamsigns so that whenever you encounter one of your dreamsigns you automatically start doing reality checks. If you dream of classrooms or beaches or driving fast in a car, whenever you see a classroom or a beach or whenever you are driving in a fast car you will be programmed to do a reality check. The end result will be this: Inevitably you are going to dream about one of your dreamsigns and eventually you are going to remember to do a reality check and eventually you are going to realize that you are dreaming.

It is helpful to stay updated on your current dreamsigns and dream themes. If you have been having dreams of being chased for the past week, you need to activate a trigger onto the idea of being chased so that whenever you are being chased you will realize that you need to do a reality check. By becoming intimately acquainted with your dreamsigns and linking reality checks to these dreamsigns, you will be laying a solid foundation for future lucid dreaming adventures.

As you can see, these six steps are all interwoven into one basic process. Leaving out just one step will diminish the effectiveness of all the other steps, and in turn, it will decrease the actual results of the entire process. Almost all of the other techniques and methods mentioned for inducing lucid dreams are based on this process to a certain extent. Often, they are offshoots of this process or are limited versions of one or more of these six basic steps. Study them and internalize them. Practice them diligently and consistently and your subconscious will become ingrained with them. By following these six basic steps, you will inevitably have a lucid dream. Eventually these habits will carry over into your dreams, and hopefully the final payoff will be when you say, "**Yes, I am dreaming!**"

stay lucid,

bird ^v^

Marc VanDeKeere